

# THE epicenter

Employee Newsletter of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System • Edition 3, 2008

## VA Palo Alto Health Care System Designated A Center of Excellence for Women's Health

Women veterans' physical and mental health care at the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) recently received official recognition for being among the best health care in our country. Designated a Center of Excellence for Women's Health, the VAPAHCS is currently the only VA to receive this honor.

"As everyone knows, women are playing an ever increasing role in our military and it is a critical role. Now, it is our turn to ensure they receive the best health care available -- that is our critical role," said Lisa Freeman, VAPAHCS director. "This designation recognizes that VAPAHCS is fulfilling that role well. From the Women's Health Clinic and Women's Trauma Recovery Program to our Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center, outpatient clinics, Vet Centers and research programs, our women veterans are held in high esteem and are recognized as integral members of our health care system."

In 2007, the VAPAHCS treated nearly 6,000 women, who represented approximately 10 percent of the overall veterans treated. Director of the Women's Health Clinic Dr. Samina Iqbal, a VA employee for more than 14 years said, "While all veterans require convenient access to medical care, we recognize that women have some special needs, which must be addressed. Our success is because of the joint efforts of the women's health center and women's mental health center teams providing an interdisciplinary health care approach for women that are unparalleled in the civilian sector."

The health care system has many innovative programs for women veterans.

The Women's Health Center, which is a comprehensive clinical center providing primary care, preventive health, behavioral medicine and counseling, and gynecological specialty services in and environment devoted to women.

The Women's Trauma Recovery Program was the first residential program of its kind in the nation and still the only program on the West Coast. Women veterans can receive treatment for both

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Photo by Chuck Revell

*Women Veteran's Coordinator Ann Thraikill and Dr. Samina Iqbal, seated, talk to one of the nearly 6,000 women seen at the VA Palo Alto Women's Health Clinic.*



Photo by Chuck Revell

*OEF/OIF Women's Clinic Staff: Dr. Edward Cohen, Alisa Springer, Ann Thraikill, Dr. Samina Iqbal, Renee Wagner, Dr. Natara Garavoy, Dr. Susan Frayne and Dr. Suvarna Akki.*

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# A Word From Our Director



**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman, Director  
VA Palo Alto Health Care System**

**A**nother challenging and rewarding fiscal year recently closed out! I want to thank all of our staff, volunteers and other stakeholders for continuing to provide world class care to our patients. The month of October offered us a special opportunity to express our appreciation to our patients and focus on customer service with special activities at all sites.

We all understand our veterans and active

duty service members are unique customers and consumers of our health care services. We recognize that the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, unlike private sector health care systems, exists to support their unique needs. Our research and education efforts have a special and unique veteran focus. We consistently examine the way we provide care to ensure it is not just “patient-centered” but “veteran-centered.”

Some added initiatives focused on “veteran-centered” care include the deployment of specially trained service recovery advocates [health care system-wide], to address and resolve issues as they arise. We have also instituted a “Fresh Eyes on Service” campaign to identify our strengths and weaknesses at all sites in addressing veteran needs in real time as employees who are also veterans make these assessments and provide swift feedback.

In Fiscal Year 2009, we will re-emphasize efforts to renew each employee’s commitment to our mission and to ensure each employee understands and embraces their role – and feels empowered to fulfill that mission. This is especially important as we enhance our outreach efforts to returning service members – especially those in the National Guard and Reserve. We offer world class care to America’s Heroes – but too often, returning service members do not know where VA services are available or that they are available at all.

While we hope the pilot program to advertise VA services rapidly expands, right now, all of you are our best form of advertisement. Let your friends, neighbors, and community members know you work at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System; express how proud you are of the care we offer. Let them know we offer comprehensive care and specialized care for veterans. Very few people in health care can match our boast that we are empowered to offer whatever care a veteran needs – without going through an insurer or a complex authorization process. We want to be sure every veteran who needs health care knows of the services the VA offers – and takes advantage of them.

I would like to close by highlighting two programs that recently received national recognition. In August 2008, the VA Palo Alto Health Care System received the designation as a Center of Excellence for Women’s Health. We are currently the only health care system in VHA to hold this designation. Some of the innovative programs we offer women veterans include the Women’s Health Center, the Women’s Trauma Recovery Program, the Women’s Prevention, Outreach and Educational Center and our Women’s Health Research Program. Please join me in congratulating all VA staff members on our medical and mental health care teams, who worked hard to advance women veterans’ health.

In September 2008, the VA Palo Alto Health Care System along with the Homeless Veterans Emergency Housing Facility at Menlo Park and the Santa Clara County Valley Homeless Health Care received the VA Secretary’s top award for Outstanding Achievement in Service to Homeless Veterans. This award recognized the VAPAHCS THRIVE initiative. THRIVE is a collaboration between VA and community partners to treat homeless veterans who have the desire to return to independent living. In a ceremony on September 19, 2008, Dr. Keith Harris and his team were recognized for their passion and innovation in creating and expanding the THRIVE program.

We are very fortunate to work in an environment with so many talented and committed staff, truly embracing our mission. I am extremely proud of all of you and urge you to continue your terrific work and to achieve even more gains for our veterans.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth J. Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "J".

**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman  
Director**

**VAPAHCS – Committed to Providing Excellent Customer Service**

# Hundreds Attend Cancer Survivors' Day

The VA Palo Alto Health Care System Multidisciplinary Cancer Program held a Cancer Survivors' Day on August 22, 2008, with approximately 330 attendees. A life-affirming program of song, inspirational words, food, music and information helped everyone who attended celebrate the gift of life and the struggle against cancer.

The multidisciplinary program at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) includes nurses, physicians, social workers, psychologists, physical and occupational therapists, pharmacists, clerks, and other support staff that involves all departments of our health care system. Since 1977, the VA Palo Alto Cancer Program has maintained the Approval Award of The American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer. More than 16,000 cancer patients received treatment at the VA Palo Alto, and there are more than 3,400 current cancer survivors.

Highlights of the program included a rousing address by Ms. Lisa Freeman, VAPAHCS director, who inspired the audience to envision a country without cancer deaths. She asked everyone to work toward making the United States of America that nation, confidently proclaiming that Americans can reach any goal set.

A moving speech by Mr. Steve Malone, a Marine Corps Veteran and cancer survivor, described how he met the challenges of cancer diagnosis, treatment and recovery using the mental discipline and toughness learned through his military training.

Chaplain Virginia Jackson led the PTSD Men's Patient Chorus in singing the National Anthem, God Bless the USA, and the



Photo by Curt Campbell

assembled crowd joined in singing a medley of armed service songs including the Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force and Coast Guard anthems. A short 'Survivors Walk' to the front of the hospital for a photo shoot preceded a barbeque lunch. Information booths staffed by the American Cancer Society, Disabled American Veterans, Nutrition Services, Eligibility and Compensation Service, Decedent Affairs and Social Work Service were available to answer questions and provide up to date information. Dr. Harlan Pinto, Chief of Medical Oncology and Chairman of the Cancer Care Committee stated, "Seeing all of you here is an affirmation of our work, and we thank you, for the honor and privilege of caring for you."

## Commission on Cancer Accredits VAPAHCS

Our VAPAHCS Cancer Program recently received accreditation with a full three-year approval award with commendation by the American College of Surgeon Commission on Cancer (CoC). This CoC approval is nationally recognized by organizations such as the Joint Commission, American Cancer Society, Aetna, CMS, NQF and the National Cancer Institute as having established performance measures for the provision of high-quality cancer care.

"We are very pleased and proud that we received another full three-year approval award with commendation by the American College of Surgeons (ACoS)' Commission on Cancer (CoC)," said Dr. Harlan A. Pinto, MD, Chief of Oncology Division at VAPAHCS. "This would not have been possible without the exemplary dedication, commitment and excellent teamwork of our multidisciplinary health care providers. We would like to thank everyone for your continued outstanding efforts to provide the highest quality of care to our patients and made our Approved Cancer Program a very successful one," he said.

Only to those facilities that have voluntarily committed to provide the best in diagnosis and treatment of cancers, receive approval by the CoC. To meet the standards necessary for Commission approval, each cancer program must undergo a rigorous evaluation process and a review of its performance. In order to maintain

approval, facilities with approved cancer programs must undergo an onsite review every three years.

Only one in four hospitals treating cancer patients receives this special approval. CoC accreditation recognizes the quality of comprehensive cancer care available at a facility and offers a commitment that you will have access to all of the various medical specialists involved in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

"Currently there are only 60 (43%) of the VA medical centers diagnosing and treating patients with cancer participated in CoC Approved Cancer Program and only one in four hospitals that treats cancer patients receives this special approval and we are proud to be one of them," said Pinto.

Last, but not least, we would like to congratulate Dr. Sherry Wren for receiving the 2007 Cancer Liaison Physicians Outstanding Performance Award from the American College of Surgeon's Commission on Cancer for her excellent leadership and contribution to our Approved Cancer Program and community.

For more information about what a CoC-approved cancer programs entails, please check out Commission on Cancer website: <http://www.facs.org/cancer/index.html>.



(Continued from page 1)

## VAPAHCS Women's Program

combat and sexual trauma-related PTSD in a safe and healing environment.

The Women's Prevention, Outreach and Education Center is an interdisciplinary center for women veterans offering health promotion, primary care psychology, comprehensive assessment and specialized outpatient mental health treatment for combat and sexual trauma-related PTSD, depression, anxiety and substance use. Services also target the adjustment issues of women and their families recently returned from service.

VAPAHCS has a vibrant women's health research program that emphasizes the combined mental and medical health needs of women veterans, as the clinical programs do.

"Collaboration and interdisciplinary care cannot be over-emphasized," said Dr. Natara Garavoy, Women's Prevention, Outreach and Education Center program director. "It is this approach to program development at the strategic planning level that produces tightly integrated clinical programs at the service level, educational efforts and nationally recognized research. According to Garavoy, the perspective, emphasizing care should cohesively address medical and mental health needs, is the unifying thread running through all of their work.

The VAPAHCS has come a long way in developing and expanding its programs for women veterans in the past four decades, with the most crucial part of its journey to success taking place since 1995. Simply stated, the goal focused on tearing down barriers and building strong relationships within VA, the Department of Defense, and with the community, in an effort to provide the absolute best care possible to women who have served in the military.

"Even with our advancements made to date, VAPAHCS recognizes that there is still much to do," said Freeman. "It's an attitude that continually keeps our programs expanding and improving – it is the cornerstone of what makes VAPAHCS a Center of Excellence in Women's Health Care."

## VAPAHCS Celebrates Women's Equality Day

Lieutenant Sandra Brown of the Palo Alto Police Department energized an audience of VA employees who came out to celebrate Women's Equality Day on September 10, 2008. Lt. Brown is currently the only female lieutenant at the Palo Alto, California Police Department and the first African-American woman to serve as lieutenant. Women in our community continue to break barriers and serve as role models for others, which is why it was an honor to have Lt. Brown speak about women serving in unique positions.

As the event opened, the audience received a presentation outlining the history of Women's Equality Day, including profiles of female activists beginning as early as 1848. The presentation was set to live piano music performed by VAPA Arts member Sparkle Williams. Lt. Brown engaged questions from the audience on a number of issues affecting women in



Photo by Curt Campbell

the workplace today including balancing life and work. She also shared her personal experience on raising a family while advancing in her career.

To share suggestions or find out how to participate in future events, please contact the FWP committee at: [V21PALFederalWomen'sProgSEPCommittee@va.gov](mailto:V21PALFederalWomen'sProgSEPCommittee@va.gov).

## Grandson Donates Birthday Money to VA

It's not often that stories warm the heart, but this one does. Veteran Rodney Simons was a patient on the VAPAHCS Hospice Unit from May to July this year. His 8th-grade grandson, Andrew Downey, visited often and was deeply attached to his granddad. When Andrew's birthday came in August, he told his mother that



for his party he did not want his friends to bring him gifts, but instead to donate the money to the VA Hospice Unit, "which had taken such wonderful care of my grandfather." Amidst hugs and thanks, Andrew proudly delivered a check for \$600, with his brother, Matthew Downey, (second from left) to the staff on the Hospice Unit. With the boys in the front row are Ratan Kumar, Linda Pries, Delia Castillo, Lourie Smith, Linda Downey (his mother), and Rhodora Tadeo. Back row: Sheila Kennedy, Jane Bush and Eileen Schleifer.

**Photographed left to right, front row:** Andrew Downey, "Birthday Boy" grandson of Rodney Simons; Matthew Downey, brother; Ratan Kumar, NA; Linda Pries, RN; Delia Castillo, RN; Lourie Smith, RN; Linda Downey, mother; Rhodora Tadeo, NA  
**Back row:** Sheila Kennedy, SW; Jane Bush, RN; Eileen Schleifer, RN. Photographer: Vanessa Neri, SW

# Flowers are in full bloom at VAPAHCS...

For nearly seven years, two of our volunteers, Ann (a Navy Veteran) and Don Jackson (an Army Veteran) have been donating many hours of their time, plants and flowers to our hospital. Some folks have possibly wondered: "Who are those 'Flower People?'"

Kerri Childress wanted to satisfy reader curiosity and interviewed them:

**KC: So please tell us, how did the donations begin?**

*Don:* Back in 2001, we had a good friend dying of cancer and we visited him almost daily on the VAPAHCS Hospice Unit. We were so impressed with the hospital itself and the wonderful care he received that we wanted to do something for the ward. Since we are both military veterans, we also had a personal connection to the hospital. After considering a few possibilities, we finally offered to donate flowers to Hospice for one year.

**KC: Why flowers?**

*Ann:* During our visits, we noticed that there was no flower shop at the hospital and there were few fresh flowers or plants on display in the ward or throughout the hospital. Today, we have almost maxed out our delivery locations. When wards do not allow fresh flowers [due to allergy or health-related reasons], we have tried to provide a nice selection of silk flowers or plants.

*Don:* During that first year, I would buy the flowers and deliver them to the Chaplain's office and volunteers would help me distribute and arrange them into vases. When Ann joined me in retirement, we decided to expand our deliveries, make our own arrangements and bring vases, plants, pots and seasonal décor items. We eventually added locations to the point that we now deliver to about 25 wards, clinics and offices plus Hometel and Fisher House, usually twice a week when we are in town. Adding the 'woman's touch' from Ann was a great bonus!

**KC: Were you in the flower business or ever try to grow the flowers?**

*Ann:* We both have 'purple thumbs' so growing was not an option and to the surprise of many, we have never owned a flower shop or been remotely connected to the flower business. We actually have found a couple of sources for our flowers, buy them at discounted prices, and purchase many of our pots, vases and décor items at garage sales and flea markets.

**KC: What kind of reactions have you seen?**

*Don:* Quite often, folks will stop us in the hallways and ask to buy flowers or request free ones. We never sell any flowers, but



occasionally if we have an extra supply, we will give some to staff or visitors. However, our main goal is to be sure the patient's wards and clinics come first. A couple of times employees have assumed we work for the hospital distributing flowers given to PAHCS by others. That is not the case and VA does not reimburse us for any of our out of pocket costs for flowers, gas or supplies. Even though we cannot accommodate requests for flowers for offices, great majorities of employees are appreciative of our efforts

and understand patients and patient areas receive come first.

**KC: I hear that you have other volunteer activities here at the hospital. What are they?**

*Ann:* Well, Don has been very active in the original development of the Memorial Rose Garden and has spent a lot of time in securing major donations of roses, bricks and other building materials to pave the pathways. He also came up with the idea to develop a fund raising program that will encourage folks to purchase an engraved brick in the pathways. The funds raised will help support the ongoing care and possible improvements. In addition, both of us have been involved in minor roles at the annual silent auction fund raiser. We also have worked with the Chaplain's office to secure ongoing donations of glazed pots, trees and plants for the chapels in both Palo Alto and Menlo Park. In addition, we try to visit with as many patients as our time allows.

*Don:* About 70% percent of our time is spent on the road, almost daily, picking up plants and flowers, arranging at home, cleaning vases or repairing pots and preparing them for delivery. Shopping for vases, pots and décor items is also part of that time. The other 30% is making deliveries and maintaining the flowers we have previously delivered. It adds up to about 15-20 hours a week for each of us.

*Ann:* I guess it has grown beyond the 'little' stage.

*Don:* We hope it goes on for a long time as we have so much respect for this hospital and the quality of care the staff provides. It would be a pure guess as to how long we can keep it up but as long as we are both healthy and have the time, we plan to stay at it.

Volunteers are such an integral part of our health care system. I am sure I join all our staff in extending a huge thank you to Ann and Don for all they do to brighten our patients' lives – and the staff's as well. Whether our volunteers donate time, money or resources etc., their contributions are priceless. In fact, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers and the Voluntary Service Department.

# VAPAHCS Named Most Wired Hospital

## VAPAHCS Recognized Again for IT Efforts

For a sixth year, the VA Palo Alto Health Care System achieved recognition for its information technology (IT) efforts by making the list of the nation's 100 "Most Wired" hospitals and health



care systems. The list is compiled by Hospitals & Health Networks magazine, a publication of the American Hospital Association. The magazine looks at how hospitals use information technology in areas such as safety, quality, customer service and their work forces. Experts from

throughout the public and private sectors advocate greater use of information technology in health care.

"We are fortunate to have staff who readily embrace change and actively seek cutting edge technologies to enhance our health care delivery," said Lisa Freeman, VAPAHCS director. "We know automation and technology dramatically improve our ability to provide safe, effective and efficient care to our veterans. It allows doctors and nurses to respond more rapidly to the needs of patients."

Of the 153 VA Hospitals nationwide, VAPAHCS is one of only five to receive this award in 2008 and only one of two VA facilities to receive the recognition six times! Also recognized this year was VISN 21's VA Central California HCS.

Hospitals that embrace technology demonstrate better patient satisfaction outcomes, according to the AHA Satisfaction Survey. The survey also shows better outcomes in risk-adjusted mortality and other key quality measures. Health IT has shown incredible promise in helping us improve the quality and safety of the care that hospitals deliver every day. The results from the Most Wired survey confirm that today's patient also understands the benefits of IT in improving care and improving the overall hospital experience.

Quality and satisfaction are often tied to key initiatives and goals, which hospitals are striving towards by using technology and process improvement. The most successful hospitals use technology as part of an overall strategy to achieve significant results. Most Wired hospitals excel in many ways but a strong investment in and commitment to information technology is characteristic of leaders who are looking at all of the elements needed to be a high-performing organization.

## 2008 Most Wired Patient Satisfaction Analysis

Patients favor hospitals with advanced information technology. An analysis of data from the 2008 Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study finds that patients at top technology hospitals have a better overall assessment of their stay and specifically are more satisfied with the admissions process and the manner in which tests and treatments are handled. The 100 Most Wired achieve better patient satisfaction results than other hospitals in the following areas:

Patient satisfaction with...	Statistically significant at:
Admission process	99 %
Room	95
Nurses	90
Tests and treatments	99
Visitor and family interactions and services	95
Physicians	95
Addressing personal issues	95
Overall assessment of the hospital	99

*Sources: Hospitals & Health Networks' Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study, 2008.*

Congratulations on the Veterans Administration Palo Alto Health Care System being recognized as one of the nation's 100 "Most Wired" hospitals and health systems for the sixth year in a row by Hospitals & Health Networks magazine.

I am pleased that the VAPAHCS is so effectively using information technology to provide high quality health care services to the men and women who have served our country. Congratulations again on the recognition. If I can ever be of service to you or the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, please contact me.

*Ira Ruskin  
Assembly Member, 21st District*



# Monterey Puts Fitness at the Forefront

*Carl Casillas*

The exercise room has provided employees at the Monterey Clinic with the opportunity to exercise before work, during lunch or after work. Making exercise accessible is a valuable employee benefit. Encouraging employees to make healthy choices and providing an exercise room benefit the organization and the mission.

Seven years ago, funding became available through the staff Wellness Clinic for an on site exercise area. Safety and an accessible area, which consists of a small footprint, were certain factors for consideration.

At the Monterey clinic, we have a number of employees who exercise regularly for a variety of reasons: staying in shape, health, dedication and an “esprit de corps,” ready to answer the call of military duty. Other benefits include an increase in energy level, emotional and spiritual stability, and the ability to extend your wardrobes usefulness.

However, the key is attitude. The culture that is created by this core group is open, non-judgmental and extends encouragement. There is mentoring and

sharing of approaches, exercises, a no pressure openness, good natured humor and reinforcement that keeps the momentum going.

Getting started is the hardest step. Waiting for motivation, is like waiting for a bus that will never come. This core group offers encouragement and coaching to other employees on how to get

started with an exercise program tailored to fit the individual. It is not about how fast, how long or how much you can exercise; it is about getting started, establishing a routine and making it part of your everyday life.

If you happen to wander by the exercise room when there has been an impromptu gathering of two or three members of this core group, please join in on a set or two of pull-ups, push-ups, or the exercise “du jour.” On the other hand, you can just watch and be inspired to get started on your own exercise program.

Whether individually or at your own division or CBOC, we hope you too have as much fun as we are in putting “fitness at the forefront” of your daily routine.



**Monterey CBOC Jocks: (Front to back)**  
*DeWayne Johnson (Pharmacy), Mitesh Patel (Lab), John Conley (Lab), Dr. Nicholas Sasson (GMC), LVN Carl Casillas (GMC).*

## How to Get on the **MOVE!** WEIGHT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

More than 70 percent of veterans receiving medical care from the VA are overweight or obese and 24% have diabetes. Overweight and obesity increases risk for heart disease, hypertension, stroke, cancer, sleep apnea, and diabetes. The VA developed the MOVE! Weight Management Program to help overweight and obese veterans lose weight, keep it off, and improve their health. MOVE! is an evidence-based, patient-centered weight management program with a comprehensive focus on behavior, nutrition, and physical activity.

### **The MOVE! Weight Management Program Includes:**

The MOVE! Program uses a public health approach to screen all overweight veteran patients, provide counseling about health risks, and offer enrollment in MOVE!.

As part of MOVE! enrollment, patients complete an online questionnaire, the MOVE!23. It covers medical history, eating habits, level of activity and other issues concerning weight management.

More than 120 MOVE! patient handouts are available that offer practical, economical tips for weight management.

A patient-oriented MOVE! website, [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov), provides access to the MOVE!23, patient handouts, and public service announcements.

### **The MOVE Program is not Just about Veterans – MOVEmployee is available for VA employees!**

VAPAHCS started a MOVEmployee pilot group and will open up this program to employees in November with weight classes and counseling. Staff from Nutrition, Recreation Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Employee Health & Behavioral Med will donate their time and expertise to help employees manage their weight.

The MOVE and the MOVEmployee Programs as well as the Farmers Market are examples of the VA's commitment of encouraging healthy habits for both veterans and employees. VAPAHCS also hired a full-time employee wellness/fitness coordinator, who joined the team in October. A workshop “30 minute to a healthier you” is offered at noon on the second Tuesday of each month in the main auditorium and Vtel for the CBOCS.

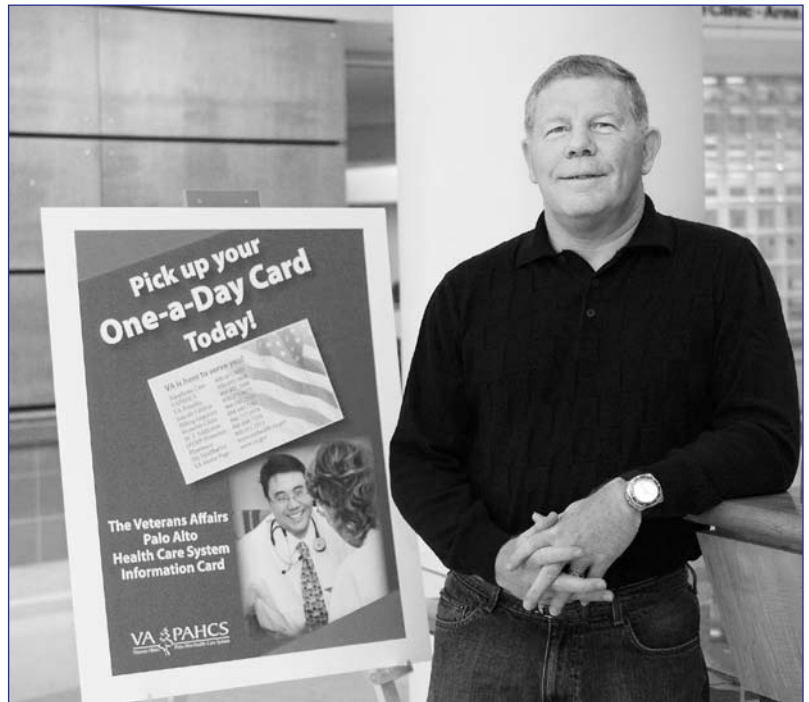
For more information on MOVEmployee, please contact: Camilla Coakley x69933.

# Customer Service Skills Shine through Emerging Leaders Development Program

In May 2008, Phoenix Arivett, VAPAHCS Admissions and Eligibility Specialist, began the Emerging Leaders Development Program, (ELDP). He decided to apply for ELDP and feels fortunate about the selection for the professional development program.

“When I attended the first class,” Arivett said, “we were informed that we had to complete a customer service project and I had no idea what to do.” Arivett was inspired by a veteran who expressed his appreciation for a VA phone number he needed for a specific issue. The veteran said, “The number you gave me is important, and I am going to let everyone know who to call.” He began to think about other important phone numbers and information veterans routinely inquire about and the best way in which to share that information with our veterans.

“So, I started to lay the groundwork...my first stop was to the Communications office to get input,” said Arivett. He also appreciates the input and encouragement from Mr. Tony Fitzgerald, acting VAPAHCS Associate Director, in addition to other staff members throughout various services.



*Photo by Curt Campbell*

Mr. Arivett further described his ELDP experience and noted, “While in the class, we were introduced to a High Performance Development Model which helped me utilize tools highlighted in the program such as creative thinking, continuous assessment, and targeting veterans. This helped me design what I call a ‘One a Day (quick-reference informational) Card,’” he added.

According to Arivett, we can all target veterans and offer them easy access information, by using the card. If we get “one” veteran to use the card, it serves its purpose! It is another customer service initiative, which will reach out to veterans and let them know we are here to help and serve! The cards launched during “Customer Appreciation Week,” the week of October 6, 2008.

## HRMS Focuses on New Outreach Effort

*Robert Trefault  
Human Resources Management Service*

VAPAHCS Human Resources Management Service has been very active in helping returning service members and veterans in their future recruitment efforts. As part of the Veterans Employment Coordinator Program, we continue to send our Vacancy Listing sheet to local colleges and military/reserve units. They have in turn forwarded them to their service members, even to those deployed overseas. We have received phone calls, emails, and visits from veterans as a direct result of these outreach initiatives. Our collaboration with the Veteran Service Organizations, which help veterans complete their application and review their resumes, contributes to the success of the program.

By taking the time to help veterans rewrite their resume for federal and private sector employment, we have helped many obtain

interviews at our facility as well as support selection by outside agencies for employment.

VAPAHCS has hired veterans through this process, and we have received applications for several “hard to fill” positions, including Physician Assistants. We have a number of Veteran applications in review at this time and have been fortunate enough to refer Veterans relocating out of our area to other VA facilities near their new home.

We look forward to assisting our Veterans in beginning a new career, please help us promote our health care system as an option for employment or students. For additional information about HR recruitment initiatives, please email [Robert.trefault@va.gov](mailto:Robert.trefault@va.gov).



# VA Researcher Recognized Nationally

Brain injury and vision is something that Gregory Goodrich, PhD, a research psychologist at the VAPAHCS, studies to understand. His research has been published and written about in newspapers



Photo by Curt Campbell

across the country, making him one of the country's leading authorities on visual impairment among veterans and service members with traumatic brain injury and PTSD.

"In mild TBI, patients tend to have normal visual acuities and are often considered not to have vision problems," said Dr. Goodrich. "Our work has highlighted the need to do more comprehensive exams, including binocular function evaluations."

Binocular dysfunctions can make reading difficult and cause problems in education and employment. They can also interfere with safe driving, promote eye fatigue, and, if not treated, compound depression and other psychological symptoms, he said.

"Patients often don't realize their symptoms are related to vision, but they may feel that things just aren't quite right," Dr. Goodrich added. "We hope our research will result in better screening and overall care."

## VAPAHCS Neuropsychologists Selected for International Board

The Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology Editorial Board selected Laura Howe, J.D. /PhD, Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center Psychologist/Neuropsychologist, to join their Editorial Board, which is a prominent scientific/research journal in the Neuropsychology field.

Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology is a bimonthly journal sponsored by the National Academy of Neuropsychology. The journal publishes original contributions dealing with psychological aspects of the etiology, diagnosis, and treatment of disorders arising out of dysfunction of the central nervous system.

Laura's unique background in Neuropsychology complements our Polytrauma team. After completing her undergraduate degree, Laura entered a new joint J.D./PhD. Program in Psychology and Law which was underway at Pacific Graduate School of Psychology (PGSP) and Golden Gate University. In approaching them about exploring nontraditional areas, she proposed a way to combine PGSP's J.D. /PhD program in Psychology and the Law with Neuropsychology. Her idea inspired a new combined program, preparing students for a career in either discipline.

Jim Moses, also a VAPAHCS Neuropsychologist, has also participated on the Editorial Board of Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology for many years.

The Editorial Board is comprised of only 60-70 people internationally. Having two VAPAHCS staff members on the Board is another reflection of the caliber and quality of our VA team.



## Combined Federal Campaign

### Be a Star in Someone's Life!

Each year thousands of our colleagues respond to a call to action by giving their time and money to the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Because of this dedication to service, the CFC has grown to become the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign.

Countless VAPAHCS staff, patients and families have received assistance and support from many of these organizations on a local and national level.

Every donated dollar counts in making a difference in someone's life.

The last day to donate is December 15, 2008. If you have not received your CFC materials and would like more information, please contact: Travis Matthews at extension 62448 or via email at [travis.matthews@va.gov](mailto:travis.matthews@va.gov).

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## Combined Federal Campaign

Submit a CFC form by December 1, 2008 and be eligible for a drawing.

### Prizes You Could Win:

- Relaxation Spa Bath Basket
- One-Year Family Membership MOMA San Francisco (Museum of Arts)
- One-Year Family Membership to California Academy of Sciences
- Four Tickets to Six Flags
- Manicure & Pedicure

For more information about the Combined Federal Campaign, check out the web site at: [www.bayareacfc.com](http://www.bayareacfc.com).



# You Make a Difference!

*Submitted by staff, our veterans and their families*

I want to address the abundance of support given to me by Ms. Nancy Elliott, a Social Worker in the VA Stockton Clinic. Ms. Elliott has been a part of my support group for over four years and I remain a grateful patient of this extraordinary individual. I cannot recall one instance where she did not conduct herself in a professional manner. She is a reflection of what the VA should be about. For all she has willingly given to me, I want to say thanks.

— *A Vietnam Veteran*

I was diagnosed with AIDs over 10 years ago. Dr. Barrera, MD, Chief of Otolaryngology Service has treated me with the utmost courtesy, kindness and sensitivity that I could have ever asked for. He has helped “piece” part of me back together, which has given me more confidence in myself as well as better self-esteem. I’m sorry to hear that he will be leaving soon for another assignment. I wish the very best for Dr. Barrera and will never forget the difference he has made in my life.

— *A Veteran*

I would like to submit a letter of commendation on behalf of Mr. David Sisson, a psychiatric nurse at the VA Clinic in San Jose who treated my uncle for nearly a year before he died earlier this year. I found Mr. Sisson to be professional, caring, and quick to respond to the many problems that developed with my uncle’s erratic behavior and treatment. The last year of my uncle’s life was extremely difficult, and I don’t think we could have gotten through that without Mr. Sisson’s help. Too often, people do wonderful things and we never hear about them. I wanted you to know that you have one of the best representatives of the VA System in Mr. Sisson.

— *A Veteran’s Uncle*

I must commend Donna Barr, RNP for her work at the Capitola Clinic. Donna listens carefully, not jumping to the obvious diagnosis, but checking everything out thoroughly. She explains things well so I understand and can make decisions. I feel better cared for by Donna in the last few months than by my non-VA providers over the last 10 years, and I have greater trust in her than all of them.

— *A Veteran*

Dr. Sandra Loving and her nursing staff, Shelley and Josie in Podiatry, are to be congratulated and appreciated for their professionalism and their wonderful attitudes towards their patients. After seeing three physicians, I was finally diagnosed correctly by Dr. Loving as having Venous Stasis Ulcerations. Their care and concern for my situation was tremendous and refreshing. They were gentle and reassuring every time I went in for weekly treatments. They explained everything to me as we progressed and answered every question without judgment.

— *A Veteran*

**THE  
epicenter**

is published by and for  
employees of the VA Palo Alto  
Health Care System.

We welcome any comments, suggestions or story ideas you may have; please contact Patricia Teran-Matthews (00P) at 650-849-1222 or via email at [patricia.matthews1@va.gov](mailto:patricia.matthews1@va.gov).

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